

OCCUPATIONAL

SEPTEMBER 2008

HEALTH & SAFETY



**HELP
WANTED**

**HOW CAN WE ENSURE
THE HEALTH AND
SAFETY OF TEMPORARY
FOREIGN WORKERS?**

EMPLOYMENT.ALBERTA.CA/WHS-DHSMA6



HOW TO WORK SUCCESSFULLY WITH TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKERS

by Bill Peterman

The strong growth in the industrial construction sector in Western Canada over the past five years has generated an extreme shortage of skilled labour that contractors require to deliver quality projects on time. Western Canadian contractors previously depended on relocating skilled tradespeople from Eastern Canada, especially for Alberta-based projects. However, the demand for skilled tradespeople in today's market is so high that finding people within Canada is becoming more challenging.

To overcome this skilled labour shortage, the Ledcor Group of Companies has developed a highly successful program that recruits skilled tradespeople from other countries to work on projects on a temporary basis. The skilled trades that are sought include electricians, pipefitters, welders and ironworkers.

Identify challenges

Preserving the health and safety of all workers is one of Ledcor's core values. Guided by this corporate philosophy, Ledcor continuously identifies challenges that could exist at our projects, particularly when hiring workers from other countries. For example, communication barriers may exist if English is the worker's second language. Also, some of the countries from which Ledcor recruits workers may not have the same culture of health and safety as Canada.

Ledcor addresses these challenges head-on. Our recruiting process requires the candidate to have a working knowledge of English for two reasons. Firstly, to be employed on a Ledcor Industrial project, the worker must be Red Seal qualified and they must successfully challenge the exam relating to their trade. Without a minimum proficiency of the English language, they would not be able to pass the trade qualification process. Secondly, a working knowledge of English is needed for health and safety purposes. A worker with insufficient English language comprehension would be unable to understand orientations or to instruct apprentices in safe work procedures.

If any language barriers exist, Ledcor either assigns a co-worker to assist the individual with interpretation or

provides appropriate training to ensure the worker is fully aware and has the knowledge required to work in a safe manner.

Overcome preconceived opinions

Initially, some members of the Canadian workforce were reluctant to work alongside the temporary foreign workers. Preconceived opinions existed relating to language barriers and some thought that many of the temporary foreign workers would not share the same safety-conscious attitude as they did. However, after introducing these new workers to Ledcor's Health, Safety and Environmental program, including pre-job orientations and task-specific safety training, the temporary foreign workforce has clearly demonstrated a strong commitment to maintaining a safe work site.

Showing pride in their work

The temporary foreign workers at Ledcor have shown tremendous respect not only to other members of the crew, but also to Ledcor for giving them the opportunity to work in Canada. Many temporary foreign workers who have joined the Ledcor Industrial team are proud of their accomplishments in Canada. With Ledcor's support, coupled with the positive attitude they bring, these workers quickly became valued members of the construction projects. Ledcor is proud of the significant contribution of these employees and of their demonstrated commitment to Ledcor's values of safety, quality, integrity and success.

Bill Peterman is the director of Employee Relations at Ledcor Industrial Limited.

If you're interested in sharing opinions or comments about workplace health and safety issues, please contact the magazine's editor through the WHS Contact Centre, 1-866-415-8690 (or 780-415-8690, if you are in the Edmonton area), or e-mail whs@gov.ab.ca.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY

September 2008, Volume 31, Number 3

Joe Childs
Lee Craig

Managing Editor
Editor

Occupational Health & Safety is an Alberta Employment and Immigration publication. This magazine is published three times a year, in January, May and September. Magazine policy is guided by the Occupational Health & Safety magazine advisory board, which includes members representing both industry and government.

Membership on the Occupational Health & Safety magazine advisory board is open to any resident of Alberta with knowledge and experience in health and safety, and an interest in communicating health and safety information to the public. Anyone who is interested in joining the board should submit a letter of application to the managing editor of the magazine. The board meets three times a year in Edmonton. Board members do not receive remuneration or reimbursement for expenses related to meetings. See "Contacting the editor," below.

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The magazine is also available as a PDF file at
employment.alberta.ca/cps/rde/xchg/hre/hs.xsl/126.html.

Contacting the editor. We welcome responses to articles or information published in this magazine, as well as suggestions for future articles. You can reach the editor through the Workplace Health & Safety Contact Centre, Phone 1-866-415-8690 or e-mail whs@gov.ab.ca.

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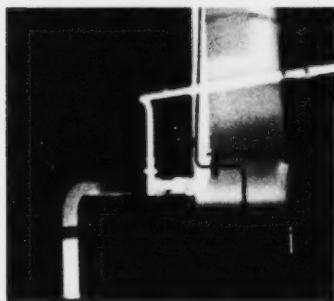
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VIDEO CAMERAS TURNED DETECTIVE

by Bob Christie

The thief is working in plain sight, stealing over \$70,000 in one year. And Doug Lillo is about to snap the incriminating photos. No, it's not corporate espionage. The thief is a gas plant leak of up to 10 cubic feet per minute. And Doug's cameras are heat and infrared (IR) units.



Doug is one of a few independent operators who are combining leak detection technology with heat detection technology. His new video cameras can spot transient emissions in seconds. Take a quick infrared shot of a motor and you will see a bearing beginning to heat and

fail. Take a quick shot of an electrical panel and you will see switches under load or breakers that are beginning to corrode. A trained operator can even spot a loose lug on the main power line coming into the plant BEFORE any of the plant breakers trip.

Companies are beginning to use this technology not only to meet Directive 60—which concerns upstream flaring, venting and incinerating in Alberta—but also to reduce product losses. It also helps them engineer controls to reduce the risk to their employees. As usual, good business and environmental practices turn out to be strong factors in health and safety as well.

Doug works with companies all over Western Canada. While costs and benefits vary widely, Doug has been in the game long enough to know the value of accurate and timely reporting and documentation—things that make the plant personnel's jobs infinitely easier. If you want to talk with Doug, contact him by e-mail at Doug@enIRgyfinders.com. He also has a website at www.enirgyfinders.com (that's "ir" for infrared, not "er" in "energy").

All in all, Doug Lillo seems like a man on a mission. He is passionate about the benefits of his technology. With half an hour on the phone, he certainly converted me.

Bob Christie, a partner at Christie Communications Ltd., supplies most of the web link resources for the articles in this magazine.

NEW E-COURSE ON INDOOR AIR QUALITY

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) has developed an e-course about the importance of indoor air quality in offices and other non-industrial workplaces, such as schools, public buildings and shopping malls.

The quality of air that people breathe at work can affect their health, comfort and productivity. *Indoor Air Quality: An Introduction* covers the factors that affect the quality of indoor air as well as applicable standards and legislation. The course provides practical advice on how to investigate and resolve problems that may arise.

All e-courses offered by CCOHS are available in English and French. They are developed by experts in the field and reviewed by labour, employer and government representatives. More information is available on the CCOHS website, www.ccohs.ca/products/courses/iaq/.



ALBERTA COMPANIES PAY A HEAVY PRICE FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY INFRACTIONS

Only three months into the year 2008, fines totalling over \$1.9 million against seven companies have already surpassed the 2007 total of \$1.72 million against 12 companies.

The percentage of fines collected as alternate sentences has also increased. In 2007, 74 per cent of fines were paid to safety organizations or organizations that assist injured workers. To April 2008, more than 95 per cent of the fines are in alternate sentences. The University of Alberta Engineering Safety and Risk Management Program and Red Deer College/City of Red Deer received the largest awards, \$345,000 and \$300,000 respectively.

"The message doesn't get much stronger than this," said Hector Goudreau, Minister of Employment and Immigration. "If you don't ensure your workers are healthy and safe while on the job, you will pay the price. Ideally, I'd like to see no workplace injuries, no charges and no convictions. But until then, there will be consequences through the courts."

ELECTRONIC INJURY REPORTING SYSTEM FOR WCB

Injured workers can now go online to report a workplace injury to the Alberta Workers' Compensation Board (WCB). As part of recent enhancements to WCB's Electronic Injury Reporting system, the Worker's Report of Injury (C060) is now accessible via WCB's website. This online service is a quick and easy way for injured workers to report an injury to WCB.

For more information on e-Reporting, check out the e-Link Online Services section of the WCB website at www.wcb.ab.ca. You can also contact the e-Business support team at 780-498-7688 (in Edmonton) or 1-866-922-9227 (toll-free in Alberta).

ALBERTA HEALTH & SAFETY CONFERENCE AND TRADE FAIR

The Health and Safety Conference Society of Alberta will host the Seventh Annual Multi-partner Health and Safety Conference and Trade Fair in Edmonton in October 2008.

This conference will attract a wide range of exhibitors, feature high-profile keynote speakers and provide delegates a diverse choice of session topics. The trade fair will include a showcase for products of interest to the conference delegates.

The Seventh Annual Health and Safety Conference and Trade Fair will be held at the Shaw Conference Centre (9797 Jasper Avenue) in Edmonton, Alberta, from October 27 to 29, 2008.

OFFICE HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDE



Office-specific health and safety concerns, hazards, preventive measures and ergonomics are all covered in this new pocket guide from the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety.

The guide covers potential health and safety hazards in typical offices and how to prevent risk of injuries and illnesses related to office work. The main focus is the integration of health and safety within all aspects of office work.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR OUTSTANDING WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY ACCOMPLISHMENTS!

We're now accepting applications for the 2009 Workplace Health and Safety Awards. These annual awards recognize individuals and employers who embrace workplace health and safety values.

Workplace Health and Safety Innovation Award

Workplace Health and Safety Leader Award

Workplace Health and Safety Performance Improvement Award

To apply for one of these awards, go to employment.alberta.ca/whs-awards and fill in the online application. Applications are being accepted between September 1 and November 14, 2008.

The awards luncheon will be held in Edmonton in April 2009.

OH&S ADVISORY BOARD OPENING

The Occupational Health and Safety magazine Advisory Board is looking for a member from labour. The interested party must be a resident of Alberta and have knowledge and experience in health and safety.

Meetings are held three times a year in Edmonton. Board members do not receive remuneration or reimbursement for expenses related to meetings.

The magazine works to prevent workplace injuries and illnesses in Alberta.

If you are interested, please submit your application to:

Joe Childs, Director
Workplace Partnerships
E-mail: joe.childs@gov.ab.ca
Fax: 780-422-2442

PARTNERSHIPS NEWS

New Partner in Health and Safety

Partnerships would like to welcome its newest partners in health and safety:

- Building Owners and Managers Association of Calgary (BOMA)
- Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research (ACICR), Edmonton

Partners are recognized as health and safety leaders in their industry. Through a Memorandum of Understanding, partners commit to promoting workplace health and safety throughout Alberta. They promote the Partnerships program and assist others with their health and safety systems and needs.

Targeted Employer Program 2008/2009

Members of the Partnerships team are again making plans to visit 300 of the 500 employers who have a disabling injury rate 2.5 times the provincial average.

Targeted Employers should expect a call from a Partnerships consultant, who will arrange a meeting to explore the benefits of developing and implementing a Health and Safety Management System or to identify where improvements can be made to the employer's existing system. The purpose of the meeting is to provide employers with information to help them improve their health and safety performance and reduce losses on their work sites.

An Occupational Health and Safety compliance officer also visits the employer to review the employer's injury history. The officer may request copies of documentation, such as incident investigation reports, and then inspect the work site to identify any variances from the Occupational Health and Safety Act and Code. If significant issues are identified on the site, orders may be issued and dates assigned for having variances corrected.

Employers with a COR Earn \$73.5 Million in Rebates

The 2007 numbers are in: April 2008 saw the distribution of \$73.5 million in rebates to Certificate of Recognition holders registered in the Partners in Injury Reduction program. This addition brings the total PIR rebates for COR holders over the past eight years to over \$389 million.

The Importance of Auditor Notes

Partnerships consultants are often asked about the requirement for auditor notes inside a health and safety audit document. Auditors need to include good quality notes in their audit report for a number of reasons:

- They provide the client with a clear description of what the auditor reviewed, heard and/or observed during the course of the audit.
- They allow the auditor to justify the scoring for each question and avoid unnecessary questions from both the client and the Certifying Partner.
- They assist the Certifying Partner with the quality assurance review of the audit by providing the reviewer with enough information to confirm audit results.

The notes included inside the final audit report will be based on the auditor's original working notes. Working notes are not submitted with the audit, and they should be destroyed after the audit has passed the quality assurance review. These notes capture key information that assists the auditor in tracking specific audit findings from observation tours, interviews and documentation review. These rough working notes are used to derive the notes delivered in the final audit report, and they are the basis for the identification of the client's program strengths and opportunities for

improvement. Working notes also record problems such as missing records or incomplete documentation. They also record and track interview responses that the auditor can use to calculate the percentage of positive indicators needed to score the audit.

So what makes a good note? At a minimum, a good note does the following:

- It identifies what the auditor reviewed, observed or heard.
- It records the validation technique (documentation, observation, interview or any combination of the three) used to verify the results for each audit question.
- For documentation questions, it indicates what documentation was reviewed, so that the Certifying Partner can confirm the auditor was assessing the correct data.
- It includes the percentage of positive indicators where required by the audit guidelines.
- It gives enough detail to indicate that the auditor is scoring each question according to its original intent.

The formatting requirements of the health and safety audit instruments may differ from one Certifying Partner to another. If you are unsure of the requirements, please contact your Certifying Partner for the specific requirements they expect for notes.

Is That COR Valid?

All copies of COR have an expiry date printed in the lower right corner of the certificate. Keep in mind that the incidence of altered, modified and expired CORs being submitted in bid packages has increased as more project owners and employers require contractors to hold a valid COR to either bid for or perform work.

Information on a COR can be verified quickly and easily online by visiting our website at employment.alberta.ca/documents/WHS/WHS-PS-COR.pdf.



Partnerships in Health and Safety is a non-regulatory, province-wide injury prevention program sponsored co-operatively by government and industry. The program offers the following:

- tools to implement a health and safety management system
- guidance in applying for a Certificate of Recognition (COR)
- potential for premium rebates from the Workers' Compensation Board-Alberta

For more information, call the Partnerships Hotline at 1-866-415-8690 or visit employment.alberta.ca/whs-partnerships.

WORKPLACE HEALTH & SAFETY

Contact us any time

For occupational health and safety information and assistance, or to order Workplace Health and Safety publications, phone the Contact Centre at 1-866-415-8690 (780-415-8690 in Edmonton and area) or e-mail whs@gov.ab.ca.



Sign up for Workplace Health and Safety news

To be notified by e-mail of all new Workplace Health and Safety website postings, sign up for a FREE subscription service through employment.alberta.ca/cps/rde/xchg/hre/hs.xsl/2984.html.

Alberta Government Library-Labour Building Site

To review the large selection of occupational health and safety information materials available through the Alberta government, go to employment.alberta.ca/cps/rde/xchg/hre/hs.xsl/415.html.

To borrow materials, either contact your local library and make your requests through the inter-library loan system or visit the Alberta Government Library:

3rd floor, 10808 - 99 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 0G5

Library phone

(780) 427-8533

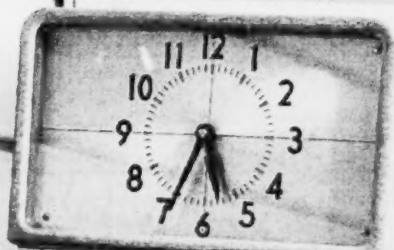
Audio-Visual Services phone

(780) 427-4671

To reach either of the above numbers toll-free in Alberta, dial 310-0000 followed by the area code and phone number.

Library fax (780) 422-0084

Workplace Health and Safety is an Alberta Employment and Immigration program that falls under the jurisdiction of Minister Hector Goudreau.



We know the real reason you work safely

Thanks to your hard work, more Alberta workers arrive home safe and sound. The Alberta government is proud to congratulate the **2007 Best Safety Performers**, a designation awarded to Alberta companies that take workplace health and safety seriously day in and day out. Did your company make the grade? Check the complete list of 2007 Best Safety Performers at www.worksafely.org.

 Alberta

A NEW FACT OF ALBERTA'S WORKPLACES

HEALTH AND SAFETY CHALLENGES OF WORKING WITH TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKERS

by Lee Craig

When Rick Ennis first went overseas to interview people to come work for his company in Alberta, he says he had no idea what an enormous job it would be. And he thinks no one can initially understand how much you have to juggle to make a temporary foreign worker program succeed for everyone.

"When you take on foreign workers and you integrate them into your company, there is just so much to consider. These workers are starting a whole new life," Ennis says. He oversees health and safety as well as business development for Christensen & McLean Roofing Co. The Alberta-based company has been hiring foreign workers since 2005.

"When we meet people at the airport I have had guys shake my hand and not want to let go. They know me from the interviews, and they need to see someone they recognize," he says.

On Unfamiliar Ground

Temporary foreign workers can need help in many areas, says Ash Tiruneh. "Sometimes having a different culture and language can be isolating for them. The climate here is often unfamiliar, they are far from their families and

their education can be different from Canadian practices."

Tiruneh is a temporary foreign worker advisory officer for the Government of Alberta.

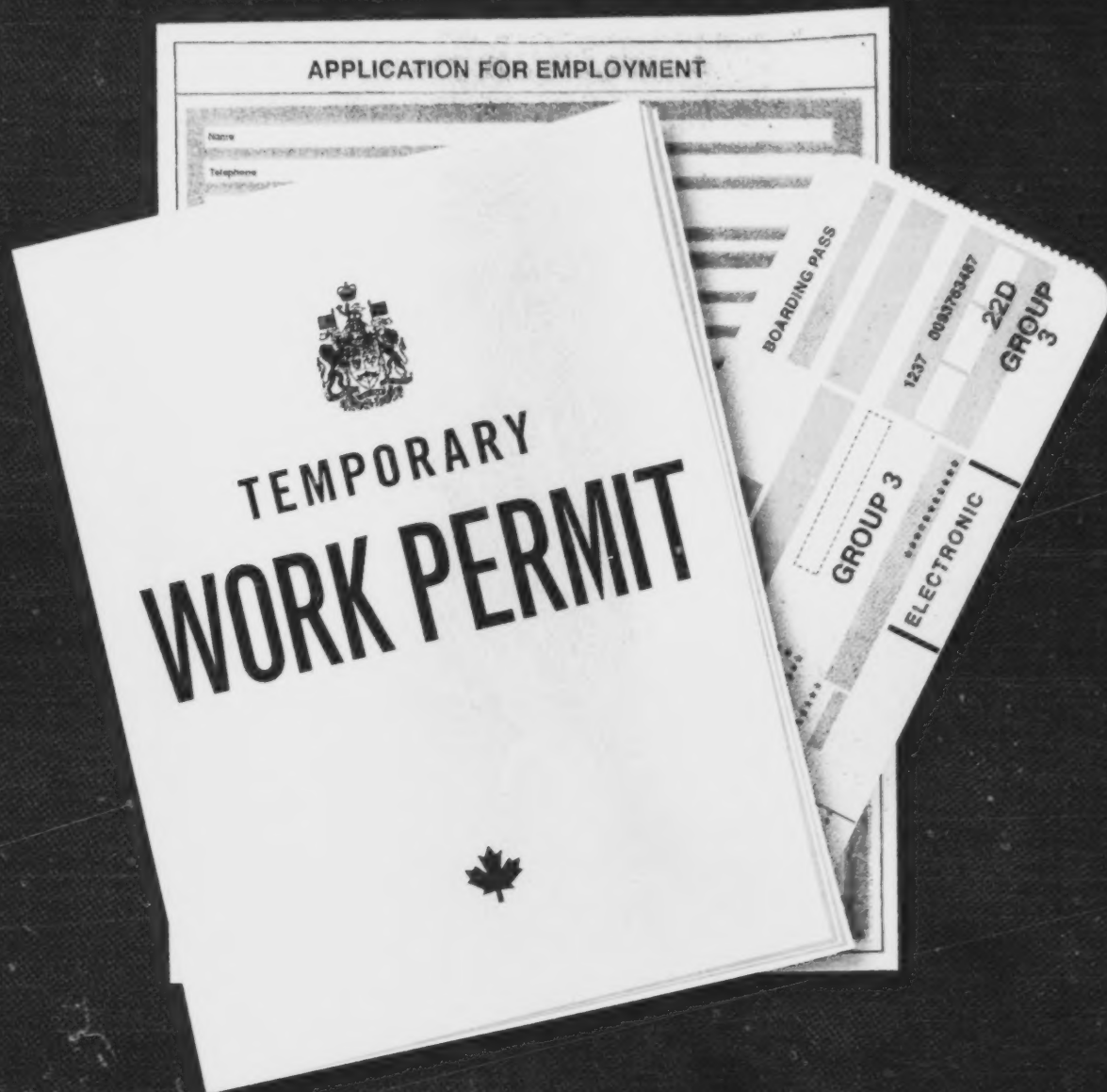
"These workers often don't know their rights and need to be educated about them. They call the advisory office with concerns and questions," he says. "Most employers are good employers, but there are always some bad apples."

"Having a different culture and language can be isolating for them."

—Ash Tiruneh

New Challenges

With at least 37,257 temporary foreign workers coming to Alberta over the last few years, their presence is a new fact to work with in the province. There are many challenges in bringing people from different countries to work on Canadian job sites, including in health and safety. As Tiruneh said, English is not many foreign workers' first language. Workers might also have strong



cultural differences from their Canadian co-workers. And training certifications from other countries might not apply in Canada.

Tiruneh adds that temporary foreign workers might need help reporting workplace health and safety violations. For example, there could be calls about injuries that need to be reported to the WCB or a work site that doesn't have a working hot water tank for washing dishes or a first-aid kit. A worker might not have proper clothing and safety protection for a job, or they might not have suitable accommodations.

Jason Foster, the director of policy analysis for the Alberta Federation of Labour, says that foreign workers are very

dependent on the good will of their Canadian employers.

"Some foreign workers come from countries where the sense of workplace health and safety is not as evolved. Some come from countries that are not democracies. That makes it much harder for a worker to say to an employer, 'This isn't safe,' " he says. "It is hard for workers to stand up for themselves."

Foster says it is more difficult for these foreign workers to go to governments and other organizations to report health and safety violations.

"What this all means is that governments in Canada, in particular around health and safety, need to go an extra step," he says.

Building a Rapport

Rick Ennis believes that in-person interviews with temporary foreign workers are an essential part of making sure all employees are healthy and safe on a job site.

"An in-person interview shows a face from the company for the person to see. It helps them know you are a legitimate company, and you can build rapport," he says. "I also try to make sure in the initial interviews that I am clear about what the job is and what the expectations are."

Foreign workers can be overwhelmed when they arrive on a different type of work site than they are used to, Ennis says. He does his best to make sure this situation does not happen for his company. For example, a foreign worker might be familiar with working in residential construction. Then, he or she gets dropped off at a site in the Fort McMurray oil sands where thousands of people work.

"We have an in-depth look at each nurse's education, training and English-language skills before they come here,"

—Sat Pal Mahey

"What could happen is that unfamiliar surroundings can be a hindrance to health and safety. A person could be inexperienced with the environment, and so they focus on the environment and not on the task. That's not paying attention to the job and to being safe," Ennis says.

Gaining Insight

The in-person interview also helps assess a person's knowledge of health and safety, Ennis says. "It also provides the opportunity right up front to communicate the importance of both the employer's and employee's responsibilities for health and safety at the workplace."

"When you talk with the workers about their experience—where they worked, what they've done—you gain insight about their attitudes," he says. "Specific safety practices for construction differ around the world, but generally the basic principles for health and safety remain the same. We have had positive experiences with our foreign workers."

The assistant coordinator of an international licensed practical nurses program in Edmonton, Alberta, agrees that doing advance preparation helps the nurses coming to Canada succeed in their jobs.

"We have worked very hard at creating a specific program for the students. We have an in-depth look at each nurse's education, training and English-language skills before they come here," says Sat Pal Mahey. "They are very well-educated people. And our nursing instructors in the program are a dedicated group who have had training in the culture beforehand."

The foreign nurses in the Practical Nurses program at NorQuest College are from the Philippines. The pilot project is run in conjunction with the college, Capital Health and the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta. Mahey is a registered nurse. He says that nursing curriculum and education in the Philippines is generally done in English, but that the NorQuest College program still requires participants to pass an English-language proficiency test.

Cultural Understanding

Frances Palmer-Barlow is the coordinator of the program for NorQuest. She says that while many things are the same between Canadians and Filipinos, there are still cultural differences that instructors have to be aware of.

"One of the things we have talked about is the need to save face," she says. "Initially, as instructors, we might misinterpret how they respond to something. But to them, they are embarrassed in the situation and are trying to save face."

She adds that instructors need to keep in mind how they are working with students and in particular, how they criticize. "The instructors have to make sure they do it in a sensitive manner."

Another cultural difference, she says, is that in Filipino culture older people are held in high esteem.

"That is reflective in how they provide care to elderly patients here," she says.

Palmer-Barlow and Mahey praise the nurses' knowledge, training and care of patients.

"They will go an extra mile to make sure they have fulfilled their duty," Mahey says. "They are registered nurses when they get here, somewhat the 'cream of the crop' of Filipino nurses."

Differences in Practice

Still, there can be differences in practices, he says.

Instructors reinforce to the participants that they should expect this.

Catheterization is one procedure that physicians, not nurses, largely do in the Philippines, Palmer-Barlow says. As well, health and safety regulations are different between countries. In Canada, hospitals usually have mechanical lifts. In the Philippines, some hospitals do not.

"We introduce them to equipment they may not have seen before," Palmer-Barlow says.

Instructors also visit the Filipino nurses a lot in the first few weeks that they are in their hospital units. This follow-up is not just to support all the unit staff, Mahey says, but to check if there are any deficits in the nurses' training. If a student needs a week or two more of supervision to aid in their success, that is accepted, he says.

"Sometimes people need more time to settle in than we originally thought. And that is quite understandable. You are in a totally different country with different sets of regulations," Mahey says.



HELP WANTED

"We make sure, as much as possible, that they are as fully equipped as our own Canadian nurses when they go out in the real world, so they provide safe, competent and high-quality care."

Extending a Welcome

To make their workers feel welcome, the company Ennis works for provides them with information about living in Edmonton (shopping, banking, groceries, etc.), food for when they first arrive and accommodation. Ennis says he thinks about how he would like to be treated if he moved to work in a different country.

The Filipino nurses are also assisted with settling in. As well, both Mahey and Palmer-Barlow say the international Filipino societies in Edmonton have been very helpful in welcoming the new nurses.

In June, the Government of Alberta started a \$1.4 million pilot project to improve this type of assistance. Nine immigration service organizations across Alberta will use the funding to help temporary foreign workers in addition to their other clients.

Starting in July 2008, the temporary foreign worker advisory offices in Calgary and Edmonton opened to walk-in clients (see Resources below for more information).

RESOURCES

WEB LINKS

employment.alberta.ca/cps/rde/xchg/hre/hs.xsl/1699.html
Alberta Employment and Immigration publications

www.wcb.ab.ca/pdfs/TFW_employers.pdf
Information about temporary foreign workers and the WCB

TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKER ADVISORY OFFICES

Calgary
3rd floor, John J. Bowlen Building
620 - 7th Avenue SW
Calgary AB T2P 0Y8

Edmonton
2nd floor, 10242 - 105 Street
Edmonton AB T5J 3L5

Both offices are open Monday to Friday, from 8:15 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
(closed during lunch, noon to 1 p.m.).

Temporary foreign worker help line, toll-free in Alberta: 1-877-944-9955

More information located on the web at
employment.alberta.ca/cps/rde/xchg/hre/hs.xsl/4548.html

WHAT IMPROVEMENTS HAVE YOU MADE AT YOUR WORKPLACE?

If you've found a solution worth sharing, please send it to ray.cislo@gov.ab.ca.

BIT EXTENSION SHAFT FOR SCREW GUN

The Problem

Holding the hands overhead and arching the back for lengthy periods of time while pushing a powered screw gun or drill upwards can be very tiring. The awkward posture and body position can lead to pain and discomfort.

The Solution

Use a bit extension shaft that allows the drill to be held in a more favourable position.

Benefits

Workers can avoid those awkward body positions, avoiding discomfort and improving productivity.



SCREW GUN EXTENSION

The Problem

Working in a stooped position for lengthy periods of time while operating a screw gun or similar hand tools can be very uncomfortable. The kneeling and squatting can be hard on the joints.

The Solution

Screw guns are available that come with extension handles, which allow workers to stand upright in a comfortable position.

Benefits

Workers can avoid awkward body positions that can be painful on the knees, hips and back.



FROM THE COURTROOM

by Brian Caruk

Making Good Use of Creative Sentencing

Once a tragedy has occurred at a work site there is clearly no undoing what has happened. An injury or a fatal incident that results in charges against you or your company means there are certain realities that must be faced. However, the incident can result in improved safety for your company.

Before you decide how to proceed, you should keep in mind that anyone charged with an offence is entitled to review all of the Workplace Health and Safety investigation materials surrounding the incident. That information is commonly known as disclosure.

Whoever is charged with the offence should carefully and thoroughly review the disclosure materials. This review sometimes shows that the most sensible response is to resolve the charges by way of a guilty plea rather than engaging in a lengthy and expensive trial process. The provincial courts will routinely reduce the penalties they impose when someone readily admits responsibility for an incident and thus spares the system the cost and expense of a trial. Pleading guilty can be even more significant in the occupational health and safety area because it gives families of injured or deceased workers peace of mind and an earlier chance to move on with their lives than if they had to wait for the results of a trial. The Crown takes all of these factors into consideration when proposing a penalty to the Court.

When a guilty plea makes sense it is important to bear in mind the potentially beneficial use of our creative sentencing provision. Rather than having fines subsumed within the province's general revenue stream, creative sentencing creates an opportunity to ask the Court to stipulate that a portion of the penalty be directed toward workplace safety initiatives and training. This is a unique opportunity to confirm that you remain a good corporate citizen even though the impetus for helping improve safety has arisen in unfortunate circumstances.

Brian Caruk is an Assistant Chief Prosecutor in Regulatory Prosecutions, Alberta Justice.

SAFETY PARTNERS IN BALZAC

by Alf Cryderman

When two health and safety organizations outgrew their offices in Calgary, they decided to take a chance and move in together. The new building for the Manufacturers' Health and Safety Association and the South Region of the Alberta Construction Safety Association is located just north of Calgary in a new industrial park near the town of Balzac.

"We've found we can share a lot of things," said Glen Leddy, manager of the south region of the ACSA.

Both groups provide a wide variety of occupational health and safety courses in southern and central Alberta cities, from Workplace Hazardous Material Information Systems to safety certificate programs for employers and employees.

"There's a lot of sharing in the safety business anyway, with everyone open to sharing ideas and training experience and always ready to look at a better way of being safe. Here we each have our own space, offices, training facilities, etc., but we also share space. Everything is priced by footage, with shared costs for shared space, so there's a financial advantage too."

"We get to share it with like-minded professionals over a coffee."

Lorne Kleppe, executive director of the MHSA, said he knew sharing the centre would work well.

"We're really neighbours as well as partners. Our past association sitting on the same committees and sharing safety training knowledge suggested we could make this work together. Our people can take their courses, as their people can ours, and our staffs can share ideas to protect workers."

Leddy said the building gives the associations the best safety training space anyone could ask for.

"We have modern classrooms equipped with new computer-based training modules and approximately 25,000 square feet of office space," he said.

Kleppe said the new facility is very different from the MHSA's old one.



"Not only do we have the much-needed additional space, we even have about 3000 square feet for crane safety work and room for hands-on training on forklifts and other equipment. We get to share it with like-minded professionals over a coffee," he said.

The ACSA is a non-profit organization funded and directed by industry to help make the construction environment in Alberta the safest anywhere, while the MHSA is a non-profit organization formed to reduce injuries in the province's manufacturing sector. The MHSA moved into the Balzac centre at the end of March 2008, and the ACSA moved in early April.

A similar shared facility is planned for Edmonton in 2012.

Alf Cryderman is a freelance writer based in Red Deer.

RESOURCES

WEB LINKS

www.mhsa.ab.ca/newsletters/SafetyLink%20Oct_07.pdf
Manufacturers' Health & Safety Association Newsletter, page 8

www.mhsa.ab.ca/news.html
MHSA training facility construction photos

THE LAST RESORT

REPORTING ON RECENT CONVICTIONS UNDER THE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY ACT

Between March and June 2008, eight employers were prosecuted under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Cassady Engineering Ltd. On April 30, 2005, a worker was fatally crushed by two sections of heavy structural steel frames being off-loaded from a forklift. Cassady Engineering Ltd. pleaded guilty to failing to provide for the health and safety of workers. The employer received a total penalty of \$275,000: a fine of \$5000, a \$750 victim fine surcharge and payments of \$100,000 to STARS Air Ambulance and \$169,250 to the Manufacturers' Health and Safety Association.

Lonkar Well Testing Ltd. On January 13, 2005, a worker at a well site was removing pipe work in a separator building, with the door closed, when he was discovered unconscious. Lonkar Well Testing Ltd. pleaded guilty to failing to provide for the health and safety of workers. The employer received a total penalty of \$300,000: a \$5000 victim fine surcharge and a payment of \$295,000 to STARS Air Ambulance.

United Rentals. On February 7, 2005, a worker was seriously injured after being catapulted out of the bucket of a manlift and then swinging back to strike the manlift. United Rentals of Canada Inc. pleaded guilty to failing to ensure the health and safety of workers. The employer received a total penalty of \$125,000: a fine of \$5000, including a victim fine surcharge, and a payment of \$120,000 to the Alberta Construction Safety Association.

L.O.P. Canada. On August 1, 2005, an agency worker was seriously injured by an electric shock from a drill press he was operating. L.O.P. Inc. was found guilty on three counts: failing to do what was reasonably practicable to ensure that the Occupational Health and Safety Act and Regulations were complied with; failing to ensure that equipment was maintained in a condition that would not compromise the health and safety of workers; and failing to ensure that equipment used at a work site would safely perform the function for which it was intended. The employer received a total penalty of \$316,250: a fine of \$275,000 and a \$41,250 victim fine surcharge.

Canadian Horizontal Drilling Ltd. On March 17, 2005, a worker helping remove a threaded piece of pipe from a hole opener was fatally injured when the handle of a tong struck him in the head area. Canadian Horizontal Drilling Ltd. pleaded guilty to failing to ensure the health and safety of a worker. The employer received a total penalty of \$301,500: a fine of \$10,000 plus a \$1500 victim fine surcharge and a payment of \$290,000 to the Northern Alberta Brain Injury Society.

NB Tree Service Ltd. On September 14, 2005, a tree felled by one worker struck and seriously injured a second worker. NB Tree Service Ltd. pleaded guilty to failing to ensure the health and safety of workers. The employer received a total penalty of \$75,750: a fine of \$5000 plus a \$750 victim fine surcharge and a payment of \$70,000 to Olds College.

CVA Canada Inc. On August 26, 2005, a worker died of asphyxiation while visually inspecting the inside of a nitrogen transport vessel for damage. CVA Canada Inc. pleaded guilty to failing to ensure that equipment appropriate to the confined space, including personal protective equipment, was available to perform a timely rescue at the work site. The employer received a total penalty of \$325,000: a fine of \$5000, including a victim fine surcharge, and payments of \$20,000 to the City of Red Deer Emergency Services and \$300,000 to the Red Deer College Foundation in six annual installments.

Premetalco Inc. On January 21, 2005, a worker operating a vertical turret lathe was pulled into the lathe and crushed when his foot became caught in a long strand of metal shaving produced from a work piece during cutting. Premetalco Inc. pleaded guilty to failing to provide safeguards where a worker may accidentally come in contact with moving parts of the machinery. The employer received a total penalty of \$325,000: a fine of \$10,000, including a victim fine surcharge, and payments of \$50,000 to the Manufacturers' Health and Safety Association and \$265,000 to the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology.

For details, go to employment.alberta.ca/cps/rde/xchg/hre/hs.xsl/135.html.

REDUCING CONTAGIOUS CONTACTS AT WORK

by Don Buchanan

Break out the hand sanitizers and start the hand washing campaigns—The Attack of the Sick Co-worker will be coming soon to your workplace.

Whether it's flu season or not, employers and workers across Alberta should use and promote common sense precautions to reduce the spread of influenza or other contagious illnesses at work.

"Hand washing, covering your coughs and sneezes, and other related measures are absolutely vital in preventing exposures to the common cold, influenza or other illnesses," said Dr. Judy MacDonald, the deputy medical officer of health for the Calgary Health Region.

"The best way to break the 'contagion cycle' is for everyone to wash their hands after using the washroom, before preparing or eating food and frequently during the day," said Dr. MacDonald. (See sidebars "Good Hygiene Tips" and "When to Stay Home.")

Reducing the Risk

"We strongly emphasize proper hand washing, hand hygiene and personal hygiene techniques, along with other measures, to ensure our workers don't infect each other, nearby surfaces or the food they handle," said Dave Fritz, area director for Chili's Texas Grill in Alberta.

"We view the risks both from a worker health and safety angle and from a public health viewpoint," he said. "The food service industry has to be particularly careful when it comes to sick workers. We simply can't allow workers with contagious illnesses to be in contact with food. If they're sick, we advise them to stay home. We also ask for a doctor's note before they return to work."

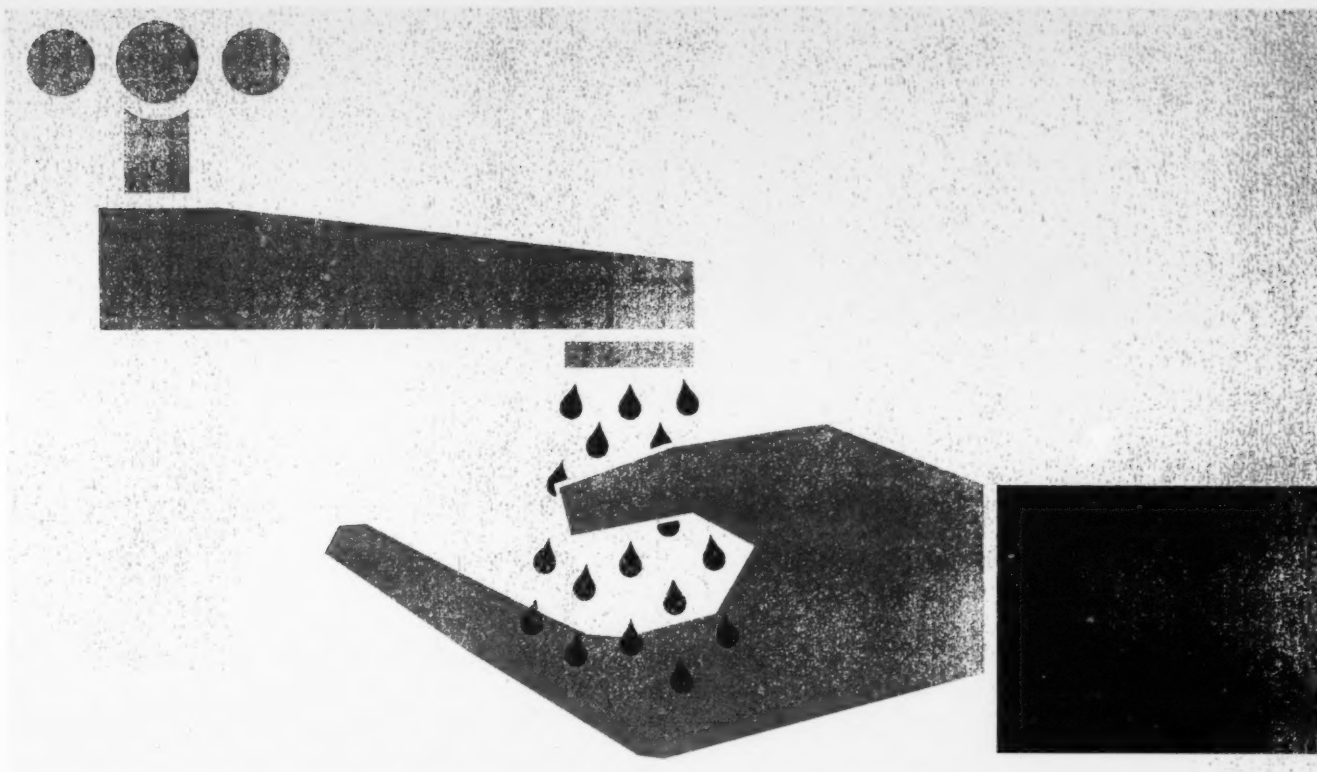
As a manager and employer, Fritz fully understands that workers may feel they should be present at work at all times, for a variety of reasons.

"Some people have called this an issue of 'presenteeism,' where the worker comes to work at all costs. But having sick workers at work can result in other costs, such as lost production and lost time by infecting other workers, who then have to miss work. And, of course, it's a public health concern."

High-Risk Occupations

Food-handling occupations, health care workers, daycare employees and other direct-care workers are generally at a higher risk of passing on contagions to others, said Dr. MacDonald.

"Any food handler or health care worker with symptoms such as diarrhea or vomiting should definitely be staying



at home," she said. "Anyone who comes to work with an infectious illness can pass this on to others directly or by touching a surface."

Dr. MacDonald said that viruses, such as influenza and the common cold, can be viable for up to 48 hours on hard surfaces. "In the course of a working day, the typical worker will touch tens or hundreds of surfaces, so people should take care to wash their hands or use a hand sanitizer frequently, especially after contacting surfaces or people around them."

Don't Be a Safety Risk

Workers have a duty under the Occupational Health and Safety Act to remove themselves from the course of work if their own health and safety or that of others is at risk.

"One of the main concerns we have from a regulatory point of view is that people need to stay away from work if they are less alert than usual, whether it's due to the actual symptoms or from medication they may be taking," said Bernice Doyle, a health specialist coordinator at Alberta Employment and Immigration (Workplace Health and Safety). "If someone is drowsy, for example, they should not be driving or operating equipment."

Doyle said employers should regularly review their health and safety management policies and procedures to

ensure that workers do not come to work sick. Companies may review

- sick time policy
- vacation time management (to improve work-life balance and to reduce worker illness)
- workplace wellness policy
- cross-training employees (to make it easier for someone to fill in for a sick employee).

"Under the Employment Standards Act, an employer is not required to give an employee paid sick time, but in my experience many employers negotiate leaves with their employees," said Doyle. "I think it's good for employers and workers to take a fresh look at the costs or risks of workers coming to work when sick. It's vital that all parties consider the health and safety of others in the workplace."

Dr. MacDonald said workplaces will be much healthier places if workers in all sectors follow common sense precautions and basic personal hygiene at all times.

"People don't always know when they are contagious, so everyone should practise good hygiene at all times, not just when they have symptoms of being ill," she said.

Don Buchanan is an Edmonton writer.

GOOD HYGIENE TIPS

- Wash your hands after using the washroom, before preparing or eating food, and frequently during the day.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue and dispose of it properly. Then clean your hands. Carry a tissue with you at all times. Cough into your sleeve if you don't have a tissue.
- Follow the rules of hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene at home at all times. This protects you and your family from exposing each other to contagion.

WHEN TO STAY HOME

If you know you are contagious (e.g., with mumps, measles or tuberculosis), do not come to work.

If you are experiencing any of the following symptoms, you may be contagious and should stay home from work:

- feeling ill, such as with a cold or flu
- feverish
- persistent cough, with green mucus build-up and a runny nose
- severely sore throat
- discharge from your eyes, which are bright red

PREVENTION OF OUTBREAKS

Alberta Employment and Immigration has a bulletin to answer questions about workplace health and safety that may arise during a pandemic.

"Basically, a worker who is ill with a highly contagious or serious infection must take measures to prevent the spread to co-workers," said Doyle. "This may require staying home or perhaps using respiratory protection, such as a respirator, to prevent the spread of the illness."

Dr. MacDonald said that the core rules of basic personal hygiene, such as hand hygiene, are even more important in the event of a major outbreak of an illness or a pandemic.

"The best approach is for the public, workers and families to develop good habits now. The more people habitually use the prevention measures in the first place, the more likely they are to reduce contagious contacts or the impacts of any outbreak."

The bulletin is available online: employment.alberta.ca/documents/WHS/WHS-PUB_PE002.pdf.

RESOURCES

WEB LINKS

www.yorkregion.com/Leisure/article/23301

Tips for healthy workplaces during the cold and flu season

www.westaff.com/yourworkplace/yw43_story.html

Workplace presenteeism

www.calgarysun.com/cgi-bin/publish.cgi?p=161725&x=articles&s=lifestyle

Calgary Sun article on presenteeism

VIDEO

Handwashing: Avoiding Germs and Viruses at Work [DVD 012]

Don't let the cold and flu season cause downtime in your workplace. This training video will teach your employees how to avoid spreading germs. Also discussed are

- how germs and viruses are spread
- minimizing contact with germs
- proper handwashing techniques
- when and why it's important to wash hands.

SHUTTLE OFF TO SAFETY

NEW ESCAPE SYSTEMS HELP DERRICK HANDS GET OUT OF HARM'S WAY

by Ryan Smith

For hours at a time, a derrick hand stands alone on an elevated platform, sometimes as high as 25 metres in the air, exposed to wind, rain, sun, snow and whatever else comes along.

The derrick hand climbs a ladder in the morning and then spends the day guiding the pipes on the rig into and out of the ground. All the while they know that a miscalculation somewhere along the line—or even just a bad break—can trigger “kicks,” fires or, worst of all, a full-fledged blow out. Such troubles are rare, but when they happen the consequences can be dire.

“This is really important, because when an emergency happens the derrick man can get confused and panic—he might already be hurt—and the less things he has to do and think about in that situation the better.”

—Paul Smith

A few years ago, near Sundre, Alberta, a derrick hand was working on his platform (also known as a tubing, racking or monkey board) when a well fire shot up his

service rig. He fell 55 feet and lost his life. The case is still before the courts.

His derrick featured the most common type of emergency escape equipment: a device called a Geronimo or T-bar. The system requires the worker to unhook the safety harness that connects them to the rig, go to the mast of the well, tether themselves to a T-bar-shaped chair and then rappel along a sloped cable to the ground. Some safety experts think the T-bar system is flawed because in an emergency a worker might not be able to reach the T-bar.

At the time of the Sundre tragedy, Paul Smith and his colleague, Darrell Boulter, had been working on a new emergency escape system for derrick hands. The news from Sundre provided added motivation they didn't need or want.

“We were working at this because we really wanted to see derrick men get off their rigs safely, and when that fatality happened we already knew there had to be a better way, and that we needed to make it happen sooner than later,” said Smith. He has worked in the oil and gas industry for more than 35 years and is now general manager of Lamb's Trucking.

After experimenting with a few prototypes, Smith and Boulter unveiled the DV Safety Pod in 2005. They feel



their invention—an open-air platform that glides to the ground on a diagonal cable—offers a number of advantages to the T-bar.

“He’ll be safe on the ground in about 16 seconds,”

—Paul Smith

“For one, our system is set up so the worker is attached to the pod, and not to the rig, so he doesn’t have to unhook from anything and hook up to something else to get away,” explained Smith. “This is really important, because when an emergency happens the derrick man can get confused and panic—he might already be hurt—and the less things he has to do and think about in that situation the better.”

In an emergency a derrick hand has to step onto the pod and the body weight will release the pins and trigger a

controlled descent.

“He’ll be safe on the ground in about 16 seconds, where a T-bar will usually take a lot longer—you’re never quite sure,” said Smith.

The DV Safety Pod has proven to work so well in tests that more than 100 of them have been ordered throughout Western Canada. Other pod systems have also been developed, including one that looks something like a covered outhouse—a design meant to protect the worker from falling debris.

However, the majority of the 260 or so drilling and service rigs currently in use in Canada still feature T-bars. Paul Elkins, for one, would like to see that changed. A lead investigator and safety officer with Alberta Workplace Health and Safety, Elkins says the pod egress system is safer than the T-bar.

“The T-bar has been around for a very long time, and it’s almost sacrilegious in some circles to say it isn’t good



enough, but I try to highlight how the pod system is an improvement on the T-bar," said Elkins.

Mark Scholz, manager of technical services with the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors, says cost is a factor for some companies' hesitancy to switch to the pod system, as is a lack of consensus on what type of pod works best.

Elkins says it is difficult to get accurate and swift safety statistics in the oil and gas industry because there are grey areas when it comes to reporting incidents.

However, both Elkins and Scholz say drilling companies have made a lot of progress over the years toward developing new technologies and offering better training to provide safer working conditions for their employees. They also note that new automated rigs being developed won't require a derrick hand to stand on it when it's in use, which would be the safest alternative of them all.

In the meantime, Smith believes the improved safety that his pod system offers is proved every time he meets a derrick hand who has tried one.

"I've had a lot of guys, new and old, come up to me and shake my hand and say, 'Thank you, I really feel safer and more confident up there,'" he said. "It's really a rewarding thing to hear, because that's what we were trying to do."

Ryan Smith is an Edmonton freelance writer.

RESOURCES

WEB LINKS

www.performancewell.ca/Serviceing.html
Video of the D.V. Safety Pod in action

THE POWER ZONE

by Ray Cislo

How easy it is for a person to lift, lower or move a load depends on many factors. One of those factors is the position of the object relative to the person doing the handling. The position of the load can dramatically affect the amount of weight that a person can safely move with ease and without injury.

Shown below is a diagram taken from a British guideline that indicates the loads that most males and females can lift, lower or move without injury. Putting aside the actual numbers, the important concept to understand is that the numbers vary depending on location—low or high, near or far. There is a sort of “power zone” close to the body between mid-thigh and mid-chest height. Similar to the strike zone in baseball, this is the zone in which a person can lift, lower or handle loads with the least amount of effort.

When designing work, it's important to keep this power zone in mind. Avoid any lifts or lowers that begin or end at floor level. Loads should begin at or come to rest at the knee height of the tallest person doing the work.

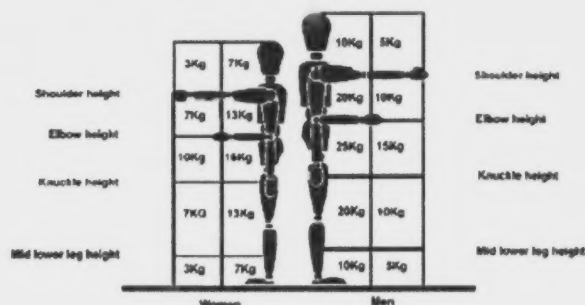
Avoid placing or retrieving loads above the shoulder

height of the shortest worker doing the work. If loads must be moved at this level, lighten the loads or preferably use some type of raised work platform or stepstool, so that the person is not reaching overhead.

Because we can't support a load for long with a fully extended arm, loads should be kept as close to the body as possible. Doing so sometimes means that an apron or other protective clothing must be worn to allow a hot or cold object to be held against the body. Other times, doing so means altering the work station to reduce the width of a tabletop or countertop. To the extent possible, avoid overreaching and supporting loads with an extended arm. As the diagram shows, lifting strength drops off dramatically the farther away a load is from the body. This is especially true when the load is held away from the body AND in either a high or low position.

Try to stay in the power zone as much as possible.

Ray Cislo, P.Eng., B.Sc.(H.K.), is a safety engineering specialist at Alberta Employment and Immigration.



REFERENCES

- www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg143.pdf
Getting to grips with manual handling—A Short Guide, Health and Safety Executive, UK
- employment.alberta.ca/documents/WH5/WH5-PUB_bcl002.pdf
Lifting and Handling Loads Part 2—Assessing Ergonomic Hazards, Workplace Health and Safety Bulletin

WORKPLACE FATALITIES

Investigated in Alberta

February 15 – June 7, 2008

Most work-related incident fatalities that fall under provincial jurisdiction are investigated by Workplace Health and Safety. In general, highway traffic, farm, disease or heart attack fatalities are not investigated.

In many cases, investigation into these fatalities is continuing. Final investigation reports are filed at the Alberta Government Library–Labour Building site and can be reviewed there or at employment.alberta.ca/cps/rde/xchg/hre/hs.xsl/781.html.

Total fatalities investigated in 2007: 33

Fatalities investigated in 2008
[year-to-date, as of June 7]: 16

For further information about comparing trends in fatalities over time, please see the report Occupational Fatalities in Alberta, 1997–2006: employment.alberta.ca/documents/WHS/WHSPUB_10yr_fatal.pdf.

A 35-year-old male worker, employed as an owner/operator, was felling trees and hauling the logs from the bush using a team of heavy horses. The worker was standing between the wheels of a diesel-powered log skidder that was used to prepare logs for mechanical hauling. The log skidder was stationary, with no operator at the controls, and the worker was working on the engine, which would not start. When the worker successfully started the engine, the log skidder began to move in reverse. The log skidder ran over the worker, the skidder

blade caught him, and the skidder dragged him for approximately 30 metres.

A 33-year-old male truck driver failed to negotiate a corner in the access to a bridge. His truck hit the side rail and plunged into the river bottom approximately 15 metres below.

A 46-year-old male field operator was attempting to remove an orifice plate from a production gas metering system. The worker caused a release of hydrogen sulphide gas into the building where he was working. The worker was overcome by the hydrogen sulphide gas.

An 18-year-old male derrick hand was in the process of tripping the tube out of an oil well on a single slant service rig. The worker had attached a transfer clamp onto the tubing and was moving the tubing from the mast to the tubing rack. The tubing moved in an unexpected manner and struck the worker in the head.

A 52-year-old female worker was fatally injured when she became pinned against part of a gravel-hauling pup trailer by the belly dump apparatus, which was inadvertently opened.

A 33-year-old male worker was welding on top of an empty biodiesel settling tank when the tank exploded, fatally injuring the worker.

A 26-year-old electrician driving a pickup truck on a mine haul road was fatally injured when his vehicle was run over and crushed by a heavy haul truck.

A 16-year-old male yard worker was fatally crushed when a forklift tipped over on top of him.

Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to:

CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT

Alberta Employment and Immigration

Workplace Partnerships (Director's Office)

7th Floor, Labour Building

10800 - 99 Avenue, Edmonton, AB T5K 0G5

E-mail whs@gov.ab.ca

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**FEAR OF
LOSING MY JOB**

You know workers have rights. A safe place to work is one of them. Don't let fear silence you into accepting anything less. **Give Safety a Voice.**

HEADS UP
work smart. work safe.

